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## Capital Budget Committee

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### HB 1413

**Brief Description:** An act relating to expanding the criteria for habitat conservation programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dunshee, Jarrett, Hunt, Nixon, Linville, Anderson, Sells, Tom, Appleton, Eickmeyer, B. Sullivan, Ericks, Chase, Lantz, Flannigan, Green, Ormsby, Upthegrove, Blake, O'Brien, Priest, Morrell, Clibborn, Kagi, Williams, Moeller, McCoy, Miloscia, Campbell and Simpson.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds two new categories to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. Categories for farmlands preservation and riparian protection are added to the existing categories of outdoor recreation and habitat conservation.
- Changes are made to the statutory formula for funding allocations made under the program.
- Requires the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to make a payment in lieu of property taxes and an additional amount for weed control for lands acquired using funds from the Habitat Conservation Account. All state agencies acquiring land under the Riparian Protection Account must make these payments.

**Hearing Date:** 2/2/05

**Staff:** Susan Howson (786-7142).

#### Background:

The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) provides funds for the acquisition and development of local and state parks, water access sites, trails, critical wildlife habitat, and urban wildlife habitat. Counties, cities, ports, park and recreation districts, school districts, state agencies, and tribes are eligible to apply. Grants applications are evaluated annually and the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) submits a list of prioritized projects to the Governor and Legislature for approval.

Half of the funds appropriated in a biennium for the WWRP are for habitat conservation, and are allocated according to a statutory formula for critical habitat, natural areas, and urban wildlife habitat. The other half of the funds are appropriated for outdoor recreation, allocated by formulas established in statute for state parks, local parks, trails, and water access sites. A portion of each account is left unallocated.

**Summary of Bill:**

Two new funds are created for administration by the IAC. The Riparian Protection Account is created to distribute funds for the acquisition and enhancement or restoration of riparian habitat. Riparian habitat is defined as land adjacent to water bodies, as well as submerged land and stream beds, which can provide habitat for fish and wildlife species. The Farmland Preservation Account is created to distribute funds for the acquisition and preservation of farm and agricultural land.

Appropriations for a biennium of up to forty million dollars or less are split equally between the Habitat Conservation Account and the Outdoor Recreation Account. The Riparian Protection Account and Farmlands Preservation Account receive a portion of any appropriations to the WWRP exceeding forty million dollars.

Within the Habitat Conservation Account, allocations to the existing categories are increased and a new category is created for restoration and enhancement projects by state agencies, leaving no unallocated funds. Within the Outdoor Recreation Account, allocations to the existing categories are also increased and a new category is created for development and renovation projects on state lands, leaving no unallocated funds. Criteria for grants for habitat conservation and outdoor recreation are revised to include such considerations as consistency with land use, shoreline, watershed, and recovery plans and the statewide significance of critical habitat projects.

The IAC may retain up to three percent of WWRP funds for administration. The IAC may accept private donations to the WWRP accounts. Project lists are prepared and submitted to the Governor in even-numbered years.

Lands acquired by the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife using funds from the Habitat Conservation Account are subject to payments in lieu of property taxes and an additional amount for weed control. All state agencies acquiring land under the Riparian Protection Account must make these payments.

Habitat and recreation lands acquired using WWRP grant funds may not be converted to a use other than that for which funds were originally approved.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 25, 2005.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect July 1, 2007, except for section 14, relating to program administration, which takes effect July 1, 2005.